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Shakedown Cruise

Raborn Defended New Head of the CIA Adopted Gung-Ho Approach in Crisis

By MARQUIS CHILDS

Washington—When it comes to assessing the blame or the praise—depending on the viewpoint—for American military intervention in the Dominican Republic, it appears that a new comer gets a larger share than had been previously appreciated.



Raborn

For Vice Admiral William F. Raborn (Ret.) it was an initial venture as head of the Central Intelligence Agency in shaping the course of a major crisis. From the first he insisted, with deeply emotional conviction, that the rebellion was Communist-dominated and that "another Cuba" was imminent.

He gave the President the list of 55 Communists involved in the rebellion. It was subsequently shown that the list contained a number of obvious errors.

But it was Raborn's gung-ho approach to his task that startled other participants in the high-level conference leading to the decision to send in the Marines.

A 'Paul Revere'?

As one of the President's principal advisers remarked afterward, the Admiral seemed to have cast himself in the role of Paul Revere charging into the National Security Council to warn that the Redcoats were coming.

"I wish John McCone was still over there running the

CIA," another participant said, "And I never thought I'd live to see that day."

This reflects a widespread feeling at the change of command in the agency that has such far-flung powers exercised in almost-total secrecy. There were deep misgivings when President Kennedy named McCone, a wealthy California industrialist and a Republican, to head CIA. He had had only limited experience in intelligence as under secretary of the Air Force and chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission.

McCone's Operation

The fear was that he would be motivated by a quite unprofessional zeal and a desire to keep in the public eye. But, on the contrary, McCone proved to be a thoroughgoing professional who shunned virtually all public appearances. He won the respect of the top staff built on the foundation of the World War II OSS. For both personal and business reasons he had long wanted to return to California.

Raborn had no experience in intelligence. His distinguished naval career was climaxed with his direction of the planning and construction of the Polaris submarine. In pushing through this notable advance, his organizing ability was invaluable.

When he retired in 1963 he became vice president for program management for Aerojet-General, the big defense contracting firm that is a subsidiary of the General Tire and Rubber Co., at Azusa, Calif.

Johnson Supporter

The head of Aerojet-General is former secretary of the Navy Dan Kimball. Big, jovial hard-driving Kimball is an ardent Democrat who has played an important role both on the national scene and in California.

Last October when so many retired generals and admirals were whooping it up for Barry Goldwater, Admiral Raborn was one of the few who came out publicly for Johnson's re-election. In a statement issued by the Democratic National Committee in Washington, he said: "If the human race is to survive, America's awesome nuclear power should be entrusted only to a man who can be counted upon to exercise calm judgment and wisdom in conducting our foreign policy."

Raborn's defenders say that this is his "shakedown cruise" in intelligence and it is, therefore, unfair to judge him on his early performance. But the question of temperament is important and here the contrast with McCone is significant.

Cautious Appraisals

The Admiral's predecessor rarely showed emotion or excitement. He was given to understatement and to a cautious appraisal of the facts and the estimates as assembled by his immediate subordinates whose professionalism he respected.

In the view of specialists who observed McCone's operation this was the right approach and particularly for the present occupant of the White House. Restraint and reserve are two qualities that tend to be in short supply in the Executive Office.

"If there is one thing the President does not need," a devoted co-worker remarked, "it is someone to send him into orbit. He gets into orbit without any help at all."

Trends Vital

In today's complex and perilous world the direction of a vast intelligence apparatus and the advice based on that operation must be measured against a broad understanding of trends and policies everywhere. A crusading anti-communism, however dedicated, is hardly a substitute, as McCone understood, for the restraint that goes with a farsseeing view.